Gabriel Luciani isn’t your average Charlotte Catholic student. His extensive resume alone sets him apart from the common crowd, but it’s his vast knowledge of the film industry that truly makes him one of a kind.

At only 16 years old, Gabriel knows more about movies than many could hope to learn in an entire lifetime. Ask him anything concerning directing, cinematography, or even foreign films, and he will produce an answer far beyond his years, packed full of details and personal insights.

Since the age of 13, Gabriel has devoted a majority of his time to the study of films, with aspirations of becoming a successful director in the future. What sparked his interest you may ask? The answer might surprise you.

“I used to watch what everyone else watched, but in the summer of 2008, I saw *Jaws* on TV and something stuck out to me. I realized there was better quality in some films and after I began studying them, I decided it was something I wanted to pursue and create myself,” said Gabriel.

From that moment on, Gabriel’s love of films grew rapidly, and in the course of just two years he has had the opportunity to experience many aspects of the industry firsthand.

Most recently, Gabriel landed a spot as an extra in the much anticipated film *The Hunger Games*, which will be released this month. Gabriel jumped at the chance to take part in the movie, and was fully exposed to the intimate workings that go into making a film.

He and 200 other extras made up the District 12 set, where on the first day they spent nearly 16 hours on set, dressed in meticulously planned costumes. When not chatting with actor Josh Hutcherson, Gabriel waited for direction from director Gary Rossey, who shouted instructions through a megaphone in between takes.

Before his stint as an extra, however, Gabriel began attending the Sundance Film Festival, held yearly in Park City, Utah. The festival is open to all, actors and movie-goes alike, and attendees watch the newest films in venues around the city.

“Sundance is much more inviting and casual than some other festivals, and everyone is treated equally, regardless of who they are. All of the theaters are located in the same vicinity; from high school gyms to hotels. There’s one main road and it’s an absolutely adorable city,” Gabriel said.

When he’s not attending festivals, Gabriel watches most films through Netflix, and foreign films tend to be his favorites. It’s the more emotional and thought-provoking films that tend to catch his eye and leave a lasting impression.

“The greatest films ever made were European 40’s and 50’s films. They are fundamentally vital to the cinema we see today. If a film can teach me something about humans, or enlighten me on how people think, then it is a true work of art. I want to bring back the original, methodic thought that went into those films,” Gabriel said.

Exposure to such events would make anyone eager to pursue a job in the film industry, and Gabriel is no exception. When he attends the University of North Carolina School of the Arts next year, he hopes to set the foundations for his future career. He was one of 23 out of 200 applicants to get accepted, and will enter the school’s visual arts program.